

OHMAR *Newsletter*

A Publication of Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region, affiliated with the Oral History Association
Volume XVII, Number 1 Winter 1994

**OHMAR RETURNS TO WASHINGTON, DC METRO AREA
SPRING MEETING AT ARLINGTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
April 22, 1994 Arlington, Virginia**

CONGRATULATIONS!

Dr. Spencer Crew
New Director, National Museum of
American History

The Smithsonian Institution has named Dr. Spencer Crew as the new director of the National Museum of American History. A past member of both OHMAR and OHA, Crew has participated in oral history activities and research for several years. In recent years, Dr. Crew has served OHMAR as a speaker and program chair for conferences in Virginia and Maryland.

He received his Ph.D. from Rutgers and has worked as a Smithsonian historian since 1981. The museum's permanent exhibit, "Field to Factory: Afro-American Migration, 1915-1940," is based on Dr. Crew's research.

Long-time OHMAR sage Martha Ross observes that the "Smithsonian is to be congratulated on its recognition of Dr. Crew's many talents and contributions as a historian and museum administrator."

The Spring 1994 meeting of OHMAR will take place at the newly-rennovated Arlington County Central Library, conveniently located two blocks from the Orange Line Ballston Metro stop. President Terri Schorzman and Program Chair Sara Collins have developed an exciting program aimed at both novice and experienced oral historians.

The meeting will feature keynote speaker author/historian/judge John Neuenschwander. Professor Neuenschwander's publication **ORAL HISTORY AND THE LAW** is one of the Oral History Association's most popular pamphlets. A new revision, as well as other OHA publications, will be available for sale at the meeting.

In addition to the keynote, participants will be able to choose from three concurrent sessions each in the morning and afternoon sessions. See the tentative program schedule listed on page two of this Newsletter.

Because the Arlington County Library is a public facility, OHMAR will not charge a registration fee. However, all participants are asked to fill out and return the conference pre-registration form to facilitate planning and "brown bag" lunch orders. Conference pre-registration forms, which will include detailed directions to the library, will be distributed to OHMAR members shortly.

If you have questions about the conference, call Sara Collins at the library: 703-358-5977.

OHMAR OFFICERS, 1994

President: Terri Schorzman,
(301) 593-2824

Past President: Joel Gardner
(609) 779-2618

Vice President: Pam Cassidy
(717) 533-2350

Treasurer: Mary Kay Quinlan,
(703) 379-8164

Secretary: Judith Knudsen,
(703) 358-5260

AT LARGE BOARD MEMBERS

Elaine Eff,
(410) 514-7653

Mary Marshall Clarke,
(212) 854-4012

Mame Warren,
(410) 956-5854

Liaison to OHA: Alice Hoffman,
(602) 797-2512

Newsletter Editor: John Schuchman
(202) 651-5474

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Howard Green, (609) 292-6062

Ann Miller Morin, (301) 598-1142

Joan Williamson, (202) 387-4024

Brien Williams, (301) 587-3148

OHMAR Advertising Rates

Rates for a one-time ad:

Business-card, \$25

Half-page, \$50

Full-page, \$75

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Many thanks to Mark Lender and Howard Green for organizing the successful autumn meeting at Kean College in Union, New Jersey. The theme of the conference was "Diverse Perspectives on Oral History" and included sessions on oral history and the Holocaust, oral history and African-American history, and oral history of the WWII homefront. The conference was held under the OHMAR presidency of Joel Gardner, whom I wish to thank for his leadership. His concern for the organization and its members was exceptional.

Mame Warren of the Maryland State Archives, and Elaine Eff, of the Maryland Historical Trust have joined OHMAR's board this year. Members of the board appreciate that they agreed to serve the organization; we look forward to working with them during the year.

The OHMAR scrapbooks left for Idaho several years ago when president Margot Knight became executive director for the Idaho Council for the Arts. Much to her delight--and most certainly to ours--she found the scrapbooks and had them delivered in time for the February board meeting. If anyone has photographs, programs, or ephemera about OHMAR activities since 1990 that you would like to donate, please let us know. We'd like to update the books and keep the historical record intact!

Finally, please attend the Spring meeting, which will be held at the Arlington Public Library in Arlington, VA on Friday, April 22. The year-old facility is a terrific place for an OHMAR meeting, which includes a spacious auditorium, meeting rooms, and a patio for lunch. The library is only two blocks from the Ballston Metro and has plenty of parking for those who wish to drive. We hope to see many new faces at this meeting and hope that current OHMAR members will bring a friend or two and will mention the meeting to others who might be interested in oral history but are not aware what great fun an OHMAR meeting can be!

I look forward to seeing you in Arlington in April.

Terri Schorzman

Techni-Type Transcripts

Oral History Interviews
Seminars/Conferences
Videohistories

1909 Imperial Ave.
Davis, CA 95616

916-753-7911
800-835-0528

Videohistory Review continued

team selected a series of projects in the history of science and technology which would take eighteen SI historians into scholarly inquiries in exciting subjects on robotics, the Manhattan Project, watchmaking, recorded moving images, rocketry, the conservation of endangered species, DNA sequencing, paleontology, slate quarrying, medical imaging, and several others. Over 250 hours of tape on twenty-two discrete subjects--along with transcripts, various finding aids, reports, and supporting materials--repose in the SI Archives and are now open to research, making this experimental work of SVP significant if only for its archival yield, and the collection is already in use in both the private and public sectors.

A second and equal, if not more important, purpose of A Practical Introduction to Videohistory, is to be found in its serious questioning about the *appropriateness* of videohistory as a research tool. Recognizing the added concerns of time, expense, and complexity for those who would employ/add video technology to conventional oral history research, the SVP endeavored to discover *when* and *where* to use it, and on what projects it might be used most effectively. The book reviews both the video projects and the techniques employed, but the reader should bear in mind the *questions* raised by SVP before embarking on each project. According to Terri Schorzman, the program manager of SVP and the book's editor, the following questions guided their decisions: "Is videohistory most effective when recording people interacting with other people, with objects, with a process, or within an environment? Is it valuable in portraiture, particularly when speech and mannerisms reveal an individual's personality? Does the lack of strong visual evidence undermine the effectiveness as a "talking head" interview? Are videotaped interviews ineffective when reflecting upon abstract subjects or past events? Is video more effective in capturing emerging technology and contemporary work patterns?" Assuming that the SVP endeavored in all projects to avoid inappropriate or intrusive uses of video equipment and techniques, it seems safe to commend the SI and its video historians for engaging in some critical thinking which may help those who would like to avoid some common pitfalls and misguided thinking.

After a brief description of the practice of videohistory, 1960-1985, this fascinating work recounts the story of the SI's response to the Sloan Foundations's offer, in 1985, to fund the establishment of a national videohistory center. What follows is both a collaborative effort and a presentation of single-author essays. Readers will profit from the "inside" look at SVP as its historians and consultants created a formal program that would be research, not technology, driven. Because, throughout the experiment, SVP hired outside crews and equipment, this allowed time for the historians to do what historians do best. Historians usually doubled as producers/interviewers, interacting with the technical crews on many levels. While it may discourage us that SI has, due to reductions in funding, been unable to sustain SVP beyond the term of its grant, there is much to be gained from our careful consideration of this path breaking videohistory program which

Videohistory Review continued

transcripts, set designs for videotaped group interviews, post-production considerations/standards, and other useful subjects. The bibliography, delightfully interdisciplinary, is extensive and should be of interest to both graduate-level readers and lay persons just contemplating the use of video technology in historical interviews.

This book should prove to be useful for many years. It should be standard reading in every oral history program office, university oral history course, group of independent public historians, and organization or agency responsible for cultural resource management projects. Like every excellent publication, A Practical Introduction to Videohistory leaves us wanting to know more, but this is a strength, not a weakness, of this important contribution to the literature of oral history methodology.

Tom Charlton, Baylor University
Waco, Texas

**OHMAR
Annual Treasurer's Report
November 1, 1993**

Starting balance, Oct. 28, 1992, Columbia First Bank **\$3324.68**

Activity since last report

Income:

\$2056.00 Membership
\$3359.00 Conference income
\$1131.00 Contributions
\$ 125.38 Interest
\$ 25.00 Advertizing
\$6696.38 TOTAL

Expenses:

\$2027.15 Printing
\$ 614.63 Mail
\$ 168.88 Supplies
\$1478.52 Food
\$ 55.00 Insufficient fund check
\$ 90.00 Refunds
\$4434.18 TOTAL

Current balance, Oct. 28, 1993, Columbia First Bank **\$5355.11**

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Kay Quinlan, OHMAR Treasurer